

NAME: Nishimi, Masao DATE OF BIRTH: 12/1/1899 PLACE OF BIRTH: Wakayama  
Age: 74 Sex: M Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: Higher Elementary school & Busin-  
ess school (Japan), High school  
PRE-WAR:  
Date of arrival in U.S.: 4/1916 Age: 16 M.S.Y.Y. in US. Port of entry: San Fran.  
Occupation/s: 1. Student/School Boy 2. Importing Business 3. Farm Manager  
Place of residence: 1. San Pedro, Ca. 2. Pasadena, Ca. 3. Los Angeles, Ca.  
Religious affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Richville, Utah  
Community organizations/activities: President of Japanese Association

## EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: North Sacramento  
Name of relocation center: Tule Lake, Ca.  
Dispensation of property: Sold Names of bank/s: Shokin Bank  
Jobs held in camp: 1. Head of the block & Cooperative & Bank of America.  
Jobs held outside of camp: \_\_\_\_\_  
Left camp to go to: Sacramento, California

## POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: 1945  
Address/es: 1. Sacramento, California 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Religious affiliation: Buddhist Church  
Activities: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe Date: 7/25/74 Place: Sacramento, Ca.  
*Kansato m. Nagle*



Name: Mr. Masao Nishimi

Age: 74 years old

Date of Birth: 1899

Place of Birth: Wakayama - Iou

Year of entry into the USA: 1906 (17 years old)

Major Occupation: ~~Carpenter~~ Farm Manager

Relocation Camp: Tule Lake

Date of Interview: 7/25/74

Place of Interview: Sacramento

Interviewer: Rev. Heihachiro Takarashi

Translator:



Mr. Masao Nishimi's Interview

Q: Rev. Hei Takarabe

A: Mr. Masao Nishimi

A': Mrs. Masao Nishimi



Q: What we are doing is.....What the Issei had done is not known too well. Neither the Sansei nor the scholars know too well. Their knowledge is vague. What on earth happened and how did they feel? Issei.....what shall I say.....The Isseis' personality, various happenings.....Little is known about such things. So, we sit down with Issei like this and ask them various questions. Having it translated into English, we'll show it to the Sansei, Yonsei and so on.

A: Are you Nisei?

Q: No. I'm Issei.

A: Are you from Japan?

Q: Yes, I am.

A: I'm not Issei in a real sense. I was called upon. I don't know too much about the old days.

Q: Don't worry. At first, I'll ask you about the times in Japan. Then, the time when you came here, your experiences after you came to the United States, the camp life and the post-camp days.....I'll ask you about these things in chronological order. I'd like you to speak slowly. ( ? ). Who is the best?

A: I know general things, but I don't know anything complex.

Q: Don't worry. Let's see. First of all, let's start with your name.

A: Masao Nishimi.

Q: Masao. Which part of Japan are you from?

A: Wakayama-ken in Japan.

Q: Wakayama-ken.



A: East ( ? ).

Q: Oh. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I had three brothers and two sisters. There are two left now  
-----my brother and myself. Only two are left. Everybody  
else is gone.

Q: When were you born?

A: In 1899.

Q: 1899. How old are you now?

A: I'm 74 now. In less than half a year, I shall be 75. On  
December the 1st.

Q: I see. Talking about your home, what were your father and  
mother?

A: My father was a carpenter. He built ordinary homes, too;  
however, he was a shrine carpenter in those days. I hear that  
he was a carpenter who'd specialized in temple or shrine  
architecture in Japan. He came to the United States. He  
didn't come to the United States directly. He had gone to  
Australia. In Australia, he had been waiting for a chance to  
come to the United States. There was an American military  
boat there, and some type of job was available on board.  
Being a carpenter, he had taken his tools with him. He reached  
San Francisco. He would have been permitted to land in San  
Francisco. Not knowing that, he tied his tools with a rope  
and cast them over board. Tying his clothes on his head, he  
swam from the offing to the pier. The military boat didn't  
anchor at the pier, but anchored offshore.

Q: Oh.



A: He swam and got there. Then, he saw one Japanese person standing. He asked the man about Fourth Street, where Japanese people used to live. I assume he went there. It was such a long time ago.

Q: What year was it?

A: It was his first time. It was before my birth. It was five years before I was born.

Q: Was it?

A: Then, in 1894.....1893.....1894.....It could be before that.

Q: Your father came to San Francisco.

A: I don't know too much in detail, but I hear that he landed in San Francisco and got a job with the SP Railroad Company as a repairman or something. He had beriberi. Do you know beriberi?

Q: Yes, I do.

A: He had it. He recuperated at SP Hospital for a while. After a few years-----a year or two, I'm not sure-----he went back to Japan. He returned to Japan once. Next time he came, he came to the United States directly. While he was back in Japan, my elder brother, I and my younger sister were born. Let's see.....he left for the United States after a three- or five-year stay.

Q: What was your father's motivation in coming here?

A: Well, our village was so small that not too many jobs were available there. He had to find some way to get an income -----by any means. My mother's ( ? ) had some kind of boat in the old days.



Q: Were they fishermen?

A: No, they weren't. It was a cargo boat.

Q: A cargo boat.

A: It was big. What was it called? It was in Japan a long time ago. From Osaka.....

Q: A transport ship.

A: A transport ship. Kaiyo-Maru. Tenyo-Maru. It was Tenyo-Maru. I knew it when I was little. It sailed on the river. It transported cargo to Osaka and from Osaka to somewhere else. They had that type of business. He came to the United States, because he had to find a way to get an income. After he came to the United States, I understand that he didn't practice carpentry. When I came here, he was working with ( ? ). ( ? ) was an orange and lemon company, owned by white people. There, he was driving nails on packing covers. Because he was a carpenter.....

Q: What type of person was your mother?

A: She was born as the first daughter of the Sekidos. She had a younger sister and a younger brother. Her younger brother went to a school of pharmacy in Osaka to become a pharmacist upon his graduation from elementary school. I don't know how long he attended there. One summer, he suffered from beriberi and died on the way back home in the train. Only two daughters were left. Since my mother had already been married, her younger sister married an adopted-groom who succeeded to the Sekido family.

Q: Was your mother a gentle lady?



A: She was a nice lady. In addition, she was rather business-minded.

Q: Oh, business-minded. Her family.....

A: Her family.....my grandfather and grandmother were business-people. They were fond of business.

Q: Do you still remember anything that you were taught by your father and mother-in Japan?

A: For over ten years, I never knew my father at all; until I came to the United States. When I came here, I was sixteen years old. I met him for the first time then. I had never known him before. I didn't learn many lessons from him.

Q: What about your mother?

A: It was long time ago. I don't think she explained anything to me in detail. Anyway, she was a nice, gentle lady.

Q: What about your school?

A: Mine?

Q: Yes, yours.

A: Talking about school, I graduated from an elementary school in our village.

Q: How long? Six years?

A: I wonder how far I went. I may have gone as far as the second grade of the higher elementary school.

Q: Is that so?

A: Then, I attended a business school in Osaka. There was a school called Meisei Business School. I'm not sure if it is still there or not. It was a Catholic school. I was attending there. In the meantime, my father stopped sending money



for my tuition fees. My elder brother had come here already by that time.

Q: To the United States?

A: To the United States. While I was attending school, he stopped sending money. Instead, he wrote me to come to the United States, enclosing papers for my passport. I left school in the middle of the term, and came to the United States.

Q: Do you remember anything about your school days in Japan? What was fun to you?

A: Nothing was particularly fun for me.

Q: Anything sad?

A: Nothing in particular. While I was attending the school I've mentioned before, I wanted to become a diplomat. I dreamed about it, thinking that if I learned English, I would be able to go to some foreign countries and the United States. At the same time, I was interested in business. I took after my mother. I was inclined toward business. I attended business school of my own free will.

Q: Do you remember your friends or teachers?

A: One teacher at the elementary school was old, but he was a nice person. He had asthma. He commuted from a distant place. ( ? ) He came to school. It was either before my departure or when I returned to Japan for the last time.....I visited him without knowing whether or not he was there. He had already died by then. The other teacher was commuting from a closer place. He was young. Six years ago.....when I returned to Japan six years ago, I went to see him. I had visited him



before I left for the United States. I knew the place, but it had developed so much that it looked different from before. I asked the neighbors and was told that his son, son-in-law, was a practitioner there. I visited the doctor and saw him in an unkempt condition. His white outfit was dirty. I wondered why he looked so unkempt although he was a doctor. Then, ( ? ) I said I came to see Mr. Suematsu. I visited him in November. November. I was told that Mr. Suematsu had died a few months before. One month after Mr. Suematsu's death, his wife died. So, he was downcast and looked unkempt. I felt very sorry for him.

Q: What do you mean by a good teacher?

A: Well, he was somewhat kind. He was kind away from school as well.

Q: Two teachers?

A: Two teachers.

Q: What was your family religion?

A: In Japan.....what was it? It may have been the Zen sect. I don't really know.

Q: Were you raised in a town or a village?

A: In a village.

Q: What kind of village was it?

A: It was a quiet town.....a village. A lot of people were from the village.

Q: Were they?

A: So, they established the Tawara Villagers' Association in the United States.



Q: The Tawara Villagers' Association. What was it all about?

A: The Tawara Villagers'.....

Q: Here?

A: Here in the United States.

Q: Village.....Here?

A: Here. It was something. Almost one person from each family in the village came to the United States.

Q: Oh.

A: A few persons came from some families. Fathers and children came. There was almost a ratio of one person per family. There weren't enough means for making a living in the village. You couldn't rely on farming alone. So, people went abroad. If not abroad, people went to other places like Osaka or Tokyo. People who could afford it attended school.

Q: Not being a farmer, did your father own any land?

A: He didn't own any land. When he returned.....it's a previous topic.....When he returned, he bought some.

Q: I see. Were there any wars when you were in Japan? The Sino-Japanese War or the Russo-Japanese War?

A: Well, which was first, the Sino- or the Russo-Japanese War? The Sino-Japanese War, wasn't it?

Q: Yes.

A: I'd say it was the Russo-Japanese War which occurred when I was little. I remember I joined a procession with lanterns.

Q: When you left Japan, your father was here.

A: He was here. When I applied for my passport in Japan to come here, I was a minor. My passport said I was to be accompanied



by my mother.

Q: You were young then.

A: I was young.

Q: Were you sixteen years old?

A: Since I was sixteen.....It was in 1916.....I hadn't become seventeen yet. Though the passport said I was to be accompanied by my mother, she made up a reason not to come. I came by myself.

Q: Why couldn't your mother make it?

A: She had planned it that way from the beginning.

Q: I see.

A: She didn't intend to go, but I couldn't have gotten my passport, otherwise.

Q: Didn't your mother want to come here?

A: She could have been better off if she had come here. As a matter of fact, my younger sister and everybody else came here. Since my father had been here, my mother had a hard time bringing up the children all by herself.

Q: What had you imagined about the United States?

A: I had thought it would be a wealthy country. Not knowing that I would actually be coming, I had wanted to come. I had a hope.

Q: What type of people were on board the boat?

A: In those days, people who had returned to Japan to marry were on board going back to the United States with their wives. There were some people from our village on board. At that time.....



Q: The people you had known?

A: Yes, the people I'd known.

Q: Then, you weren't lonely.

A: No, I wasn't lonely.

Q: Did you stop in Hawaii?

A: I stopped in Hawaii on the way here.

Q: You stopped there overnight?

A: Yes. I stayed there overnight. It was all right to stay in Hawaii, but I went to a hotel run by the Japanese. It wasn't a gorgeous hotel. It was a two-storied wooden building with railings. There was a hallway right outside the room. There were railings and a patio there. I saw a noisy crowd of people in the patio. I wondered what had happened. They thought I was an alien. They mistook me for a thief.

A: Why?

Q: I don't know. Coming to me and talking to me, they found out that I spoke Japanese. They realized they'd made a mistake. Such a thing actually happened. A wrong person.....

Q: Did various things occur on the ship?

A: Not too much on the ship. I went on board at Kobe. It was called Shugyo-Maru. We arrived at Yokohama. From Yokohama I went to Tokyo to see a relative who was also my senior at school. He was attending a school of pharmacy in Tokyo. I left my belongings on the ship. I came back. I went to Tokyo by myself, but I couldn't see him after all. I was lost in Tokyo. Though I asked a policemen about his place, I couldn't make it. After all, I couldn't see him. I had no choice but



to come back to Yokohama. When I came back, either the front or the back of the ship.....the entrance had been changed. It had been changed. I tried to go there. I had bought some fruit at Kobe and went on board with it. Everything had been stolen. The porters must have stolen it. It may have been the crew.....Before departure, a shop was set up in the ship. They sold things to us. Though it wasn't compulsory, the shop was meant for us to buy. Such things happened on the ship.

Q: Was anybody on board going because of a picture-marriage?

A: Well, maybe.

Q: You were young then.

A: I didn't know. I didn't realize. Maybe there was.

Q: How did you feel when you saw the United States for the first time?

A: I didn't feel anything special in Hawaii. Reaching San Francisco, I was amazed at the tall buildings. After landing, we were put on Angel Island overnight for a physical examination. I passed it all right.

Q: How did you feel about Angel Island?

A: Angel Island was similar to a jail. But everybody was in there together.....I wasn't lonely. I hadn't done anything wrong. My father came to pick me up. He took me to a hotel in Japanese Town. He told me to hand over all of the money I had. When I went on board in Japan, I had fifty or sixty dollars extra. I was told I'd need money. Knowing that, my father took the bills and gave me only silver coins. We stayed there overnight. Next day, we got on a steamboat going to San Pedro.



I was perplexed to see such a small boat. I wouldn't be able to sleep well at night. I suffered with the food. The food was different. Greasy. I wasn't impressed with it.

Q: Your father.....for the first time.....Did you find him easily?

A: No. I couldn't figure out who he was. He had sent a picture taken during his younger days. Of course, he wasn't too young.....fifty or the picture was taken in his fifties. My guess was fairly good.

Q: What did you say to your father?

A: I estimated right. It was a hotel operated by the Japanese people, located on Post Street in San Francisco. We stayed at the hotel on that night. At night, I said to him, "If you are going to take me to the countryside and make me work, I'll get on the same boat I took to come here, and I'll go back to Japan. If you let me go to school, I'll stay here." It was a promise.

Q: Did you tell him that immediately?

A: Yes, immediately. When I came to the United States, I intended to go back to Japan after studying for three years or so. Since I had such an intention, I spoke up and told my father so at the hotel. My elder brother was taken to the countryside and was working there. I told him that if he did the same thing to me, I'd jump back on the boat and go back. My father agreed with me not to take me to the countryside.

Q: Before going to San Pedro.....When you met your father for the first time, how did you feel?

A: No feeling in particular.



Q: Any affection?

A: No affection. Because I hadn't known him ( ? ). I was fifteen or sixteen then. I would certainly felt different if I had known him before.

Q: What did you do after San Pedro?

A: We went to Los Angeles from San Pedro. I don't recall what happened too well. After getting to Los Angeles, we went to Pasadena, South Pasadena. My elder sister was in Pasadena. My sister's husband was an established gardener or something. I was taken there. Then, I went to a schoolboy job. I was a live-in worker. When I came here.....I landed in April. It was right before the summer vacation for schools. During the summer vacation until the new school year in September, I worked at those homes, changing two or three times. At first, I went to the countryside of (Hamboldt) and worked. I had funny experience. While I was working as a schoolboy, I was helpless without proper food. I didn't have rice but only bread. There, I was handed a mop, which wasn't the one made of sponge you have today. It was made of a bunch of cloth. We have that kind even now. I should have cleaned the floor with it, but I didn't know. In Japan, we cleaned the floor with a rug by hands. Since it had a pole, I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't even squeeze it. Without knowing what to do, I cleaned the wall like this with the pole. The old lady came and screamed. I was at a loss. I asked one gardener who was working there and was older than I. He said, "Nishimi, you have to use it this way." I felt sorry. Moreover, I had to



wash dishes at night. I brought their dirty dishes to the kitchen and washed them. Somehow, they used a lot of glass wares. Each person used more than one, maybe two or three for each. Not having been used to those wares in Japan, I just put my hand in them and washed them. As for them, they got broken very easily. I wonder how many glasses I broke. I felt very sorry about that. The head of the family was a woman. There was no male in the family. There were a mother and her daughters. The daughters were grown-ups, though. Both of the daughters had a job outside the home. They were renting some rooms to a few men. I guess I was there for a month or so. It was pretty far from Pasadena.

Q: I know the place. Wait a minute.

A: Is it recording?

Q: Yes, it is recording.

A: My elder sister gave me an old bicycle. I commuted there with it. The place was so far that I changed to a schoolboy job in the South Pasadena area, where my elder sister was. I worked there for a while. Right before the school began, I changed to a family which really needed a schoolboy. I worked there until I graduated from an elementary school. I moved to Pasadena.....to Gardena to attend junior high school for a year or so. Then, I went up to Los Angeles to attend senior high school. The study was hard at the high school. When I came to the United States, I was amazed that my elder sister was speaking English pretty well. After three months, my ears became used to English. Then, I found out that her English



was not good at all. It wasn't real English. It was terrible.

Q: What do you remember about your high school life?

A: I was working and attending high school at that time. At first, I attended Lincoln High School. Because of my job, I had to transfer to the one in the south or southwest of Pasadena. I forgot its name. World War I was on then. Military training was held at school. The students wore funny looking hats. After a few months, the Japanese students were asked if we had obtained our citizenship. There were some Japanese students in the upper class. They asked the Japanese students about citizenship. I answered, "No." I was told that I didn't have to take part in the training if I wasn't a citizen. There was such an incident.

Q: Were the white students kind to you?

A: The ones I knew were kind-----both boys and girls. I transferred to Los Angeles High School. There, while I was talking and eating lunch with my friends on the (bench), some white students whom I didn't know threw oranges and apples at me. I got mad. I commuted on a street-car. I was a schoolboy, but I was working at a store after school. The store was called Embun. I was working there and attending school. I took a street-car. It was crowded. Some people pushed me on purpose and my glasses got broken. My glasses were broken a few times. Bad people. At one time, while I was sitting on the (bench), somebody threw something at me. I went to the principle to report the incident. He rang the emergency bell right away. Every student had to come to the auditorium



whenever the bell rang. The bell was a signal. From then on, students stopped doing that.

Q: Did the principal tell them not to do such a thing?

A: Yes, he did. He had everybody gathered and spoke before everybody.

Q: Oh.

A: From then on, such things didn't happen. It might have occurred in later days, though. You should speak about those incidents. You should speak up. There were some Nisei attending high school. But most of the Japanese students were from Japan such as myself. The Nisei generation was still too young then.

Q: What was your hardship at that time?

A: Nothing was hard in particular. I was catching up with the class in English, but I didn't fully comprehend it. At school, classes such as chemistry required a special terminology. I was all right with the ordinary terminology. It was hard at school.

Q: What did you enjoy doing at that time?

A: Well.....nothing in particular.

Q: You don't remember?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Anything funny or aggravating? Anything else.....racial discrimination?

A: Speaking of racial discrimination; at that time, I was as reserved as possible in order not to cause anything.

Q: However.....



A: At that time, I took it for granted as a social custom. So, I always felt as if I were at somebody else's home. While I was working at the store, I didn't feel so. Once I got out out of there.....

Q: I understand your feeling very well.

A: You understand the feeling, don't you?

Q: Yes, I do.

A: I didn't feel so where only Japanese people were present.

Q: I see. What did you do after that?

A: I kept working at the store called Embun even after I graduated from school.

Q: You graduated.....

A: After graduation.....it was about 1923. A friend of mine, who had a business, invited me to become his partner. I quit working at Embun to work with him. Then, I returned to Japan to pick up my wife.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was about twenty-eight. Then.....

Q: What type of business was it?

A: It was importing Japanese food. We opened a branch office in Los Angeles. The depression caused our loan to accumulate, so that we were in the hole. My elder brother was running an ice-shop in Los Angeles.....a small store to sell freezes for five cents. I helped him at his office. My partner settled the company's debt. His elder brother was a farmer, a rice farmer, in Sacramento. He came down there because he was going to return to Japan. He told me to succeed to his farm.



So, I came here. It was five years before the war.

Q: Did you return to Japan to look for a bride or did you have a fiancée in Japan?

A: Ah.....My relative in Japan suggested a possible candidate for that purpose. But when I returned, the situation was different. I was willing to return to the United States if nothing worked out. Mother wouldn't have listened to me. She said I shouldn't return to the United States as a single man. She said I should find a wife. I was roaming around the town, going to the post office or something. I met a postmaster's grand-daughter. I asked my mother about the girl. My mother said, "I'll ask the neighbor." Her father was in Los Angeles. I was afraid that it would take time if she had to ask her father for his approval. There was no air-mail in those days. I was afraid, but she didn't have to ask for her father's approval as long as her grandfather approved. The proposal went through smoothly, and I married her.

Q: When you went to Sacramento with your partner during the depression.....

A: Picture-marriage was banned after 1924.

Q: That's right.

A: No one could bring his wife by ordinary means. Running a business, I had no problem in doing so, due to the treaty of commerce. A lot of people quit school and returned to Japan to get married in those days. Among the people from our village in Japan, I was the only one who graduated from high



school. Everybody gave up halfway.

Q: When did you say you married?

A: In 1928.

Q: Picture-marriage was banned in 1924.

A: Yes.

Q: You had no problems, because you married in Japan. The people who married through picture-marriage.....

A: Picture-marriages weren't too common.

Q: Weren't they?

A: Picture-marriages were cut off in 1924. Every man had to return to pick up his wife.

Q: You're right. Prior to 1924 when the picture-marriage was allowed, didn't various problems occur? For example, didn't those who'd had picture-marriages claim that their partners were different from the picture?

A: Not too much.

Q: They did all right?

A: I guess they did all right. There might have been problems among so many couples, but I didn't hear about problems too much.

Q: When the depression came in 1933, what were conditions like?

A: I had a business. I estimated a certain amount of sales and ordered goods in Japan. The depression got worse and worse. I sent telegrams to reduce the order many times. Business was still hard. The buyers whom we had sold to on credit didn't pay us. We closed the business temporarily. There was a bank called Shokin Bank, at that time. We had a lot



of debts with them. I don't know what happened with the debts.

Q: Banks went bankrupt then?

A: Not the banks we did business with, but some of the small American banks went bankrupt.

Q: Have you ever experienced homesickness?

A: What?

Q: Have you ever missed Japan?

A: Well, thinking back, I don't believe I have. Since my elder brother, elder sister and others were here, I didn't miss it too much.

Q: You quit working for your brother and came to Sacramento in 1937?

A: Yes.

Q: What was your brother's business?

A: He had a store to sell ice-freezes.

Q: In Sacramento?

A: No. In Los Angeles. I came here relying on my friend. The elder brother of my friend and one old man owned some farming property in the name of a joint stock corporation. Producing rice was their business. They asked me to come and succeed to the business. I came.

Q: What did you do?

A: It was in Richville, a little further than ( ? ). They owned 2,000 acres of property. Not having been able to sell all 2,000 acres at one time, they sold only 1,000 acres. Then, the owners-----the brother and his friend-----returned to Japan. They owned only 1,000 acres. It wasn't large enough for farm-



ing. We leased several thousands acres of property, to produce rice, from a big company called River Firm located in ( ? ), not too far from here.

Q: The company owned 1,000 acres.

A: The 1,000 acres of property was released for sale before the war. In those days, we were rearing pigs on 300 acres of the property. We partitioned off another 300 acres. We had a large scale farm on the other property.

Q: Mainly rice?

A: Only rice.

Q: You'd stayed there until the war broke out?

A: Yes.

Q: What kinds of things happened right before the war?

A: Before the war, my friend went to Japan twice. He went there once and came back. When he went there the second time, the war broke out. I was the only one in management, though I had some other workers. Since it was a corporation, income-taxes and so on were complicated problems. I was in the midst of asking the owner in Japan to change the system to a partnership.

Q: You weren't the owner then?

A: No. I couldn't be an owner without citizenship. I was asking him to change the system to a company of partnership. On the night when the war broke out, somebody knocked at the door. I wondered if a telegram was sent to me. I opened the door. Then, two men armed with large guns came in. It didn't happen here, though. ( ? ). They knew all the telegrams I'd sent.



They had a record of all the long distance calls I'd made before. I was asked about them during the interrogation later.

Q: What did they do after coming in with guns?

A: I was helpless. I was farming. It was too rainy to harvest on that day. The 400- or 600-acre farm was so soft that a machine didn't work well. I couldn't help it and told the workers to stop working and move the equipments to the camp. I wrote checks to the workers including quite a few white workers, and came back home. On the way back home, I listened to the involved news reports on Pearl Harbor on the radio. I was doubtful, for I hadn't imagined a war would start. How little chance Japan had to win! It was complicated. After coming back home, I listened to the scratchy newscast on the radio. I bought a newspaper. On that night, the two people came in. It was very late. We were in bed. Entering the house, they found the accounting books on the desk in the dining room. They told me to get a box from the garage and put everything in it. I thought they would leave with the box, but they didn't leave.

Q: Did they investigate?

A: No, they didn't. They just told me to keep the books separately. As both of them stayed, I couldn't sleep. That was the time when our youngest child was born. Our baby was sleeping. It was twenty-five days since our baby had been released from the hospital. It was only a few weeks since then. We had a live-out nursemaid who helped us with the baby. When she came, I



told her to go to the bedroom to take out papers from a certain (drawer) and put them in a bucket with the dirty diapers. I had her burn the papers. It is illegal to burn things now, but it was all right then. Though I hadn't done anything wrong, I thought it best to have the records burned. It may have been fine.

Q: Did they investigate the correspondence between Japan?

A: That was a part of it. For one week, three people in shifts stayed to keep watch on us day and night. They just stayed. In the evening, they made coffee and ate the take-out food. On the last day, they said I could go to bed in my bedroom. I went to my bedroom. Instead of sleeping, I took out and separated the things, while they were staying in the living-room. I had to hide it, if I should find anything which might be to my disadvantage. Next morning, they came in. On the previous night before going to bed, I found a gun. I didn't know I had it. I was keeping somebody's gun. I never owned a gun. I hid it. Though they came in next morning, it was all right. If they had found it, I would have been in trouble. When one Nisei visited me from the farming camp to check on me, I gave it to him and told him to dispose of it. If they had found it, I'd have been in trouble, because it wasn't registered. One man, who used to work for me, returned to Japan. I was keeping his gun for him.

Q: What happened after that? How long did they stay?

A: For one week. During the first two days, they didn't let our children go to school. I couldn't go out.



Q: You mean a camp by a workers' station? How many workers were there?

A: There were five or six Japanese workers and about twenty white workers.

Q: The property was your friend's.....

A: ( ? ) was a lease. By contract. The other was the company's.

Q: The company's.

A: The company limited. It was under the joint stock corporation system before the Property Law was passed. Owning property was possible.

Q: Who was the president?

A: One white man was the nominal president. He didn't get paid any monthly salary.....just nominal.

Q: Were you an employee or an owner?

A: I was an employee.

Q: A manager?

A: A manager. I got a certain amount in annual pay.

Q: What happened to the property after the war?

A: We put it up for sale before the war, but we couldn't sell it. Everything was taken by the United States government. The rice we had put into storage was taken, too. Only one person, who was the stock-holder's child, was listed as an owner. He was an only child. He is in San Jose now.

Q: Is he Japanese?

A: Yes. A friend of mine's elder brother had a partner. He was the partner's child. He was the only stock-holder, and was paid money.



Q: One-third or one-half? He didn't get everything?

A: No. He was paid in proportion to the amount of stock. About \$ 20,000.

Q: Isn't 1,000 acres of property huge?

A: At that time, it wasn't very huge.

Q: What happened after that?

A: I assume that the government is still holding that money. I've visited the Federal Reserve office to claim it once in vain. They said, "Mr. Nishimi, you're neither a citizen nor a stock-holder; therefore, you have no right to make a claim." I was helpless.

Q: The F.B.I. came over to your place.

A: One F.B.I. member accompanied.....

Q: A police officer was in charge?

A: A deputy was. An amateur.

Q: What did they do after seven days?

A: During the week, they ordered me to calculate the business books. I had to calculate the income and the outgo. I said, "All right." After the war began, I couldn't write checks. One of the bank examiners took over my position. Since my house wasn't appropriate for an office, he moved and rented the second floor of the old Sumitomo Bank building. It began in 1953.....1951.....It was in 1941, wasn't it? The following year, I became a farmer. My talk is not helpful.

Q: You're doing fine. Then, what happened?

A: Where were we?

Q: The F.B.I. stayed for seven days.



A: I went back (to work) after the seven days. Then, one of the bank examiners took over and moved the office there. For a few months thereafter, I was called upon to go to the office almost every day. <sup>The</sup><sub>A</sub> Sumitomo Bank was already closed by then. They asked the same questions over and over every day. About six people were seated. Every day, two of the six were different faces. The rest were the same. One or two Japanese were always present. They were asked the same questions. I learned them by heart. So, I didn't make any mistakes. They asked about various things. Having been allowed to do farm, I began farming. One of the examiners took over and became something like a manager. I assisted him. ( ? ) He asked me if I could do it. He picked me up with the company's car. He drove the car, but he didn't let me drive it. He picked me up and dropped me off when I had to go to the farm. On the way to the farm, we stopped ( ? ) at a restaurant for lunch. People stared at him, for he was with me.

Q: What do you mean by.....How did you take it? You had to undergo all of the interrogations, yet you couldn't use the car.

A: No, no. At that time, your mileage was limited.

Q: 5 miles?

A: Something like that. Of course, my car had been taken over. I'd bought it in the name of the company.

Q: I see. Then.....

A: Being under the company's ownership, it had belonged to the company. The company financed it. It wasn't privately owned.



After all, that man didn't have any choice. All of the Japanese had to move to the camp. The Japanese were in such circumstances. My elder brother closed down his store earlier.

People in that area had to move to the camp earlier. ( ? )

He came here, relying on me. People around here didn't have to move out then. He came here and went to the farming camp to work. I telephoned and told the workers, including the Japanese workers from Yuba City, to go back. There was a white worker, too. The young man, who had been working for a long time, was something like an acting-boss. He visited me at the camp once. He came to see us. ( ? )

Q: Was the company confiscated?

A: No, it wasn't.

Q: You just left it behind.

A: I just left it behind.

Q: Then, did you move to an assembly center?

A: Yes. The one in North Sacramento.

Q: When was it?

A: Around April. I didn't stay there too long.

Q: You had stayed at home for four months?

A: I had stayed at home for four months.

Q: At first.....Let me see.....

A: I was called upon to go here and there. ( ? ) I took him to the farms. I'd taken him here and there until he learned the job.

Q: You assisted him.

A: That's right.



Q: A new manager. Who took it? Did the bank take it?

A: I wonder what happened with it. Ultimately, the money was taken by some agency for (emergency). I don't know who operated the company. Anyway, I was a farmer for a while. I guess the government sold it to somebody later on, including all of the machinery. That was some machinery. The harvester was large. ( ? )

Q: Everything.

A: Everything.

Q: Too bad!

A: Everything had been paid off, and I didn't have any debt. It was worth somewhere around \$ 200,000.

Q: At that time?

A: If you convert it to the present value, it's worth about one million dollars. ( ? ) My salary was \$ 500 a month, \$ 6,000 a year. They owed me quite a lot. When the war started, they owed me quite a lot of money. ( ? ) Keeping the book..... Keeping the accounts for the people who'd returned to Japan, they made the book to look as if those people had debts with the company. Those people had to repay. Then, the company deducted those people's loan payment from my money. My money was deducted. They wanted to erase it from the book. I couldn't help it, so I did what they wanted me to do. Still, they owed me the rest of some thousands dollars. When I asked for it at Tule Lake, they said they would pay a certain amount every month. I said, "No. You should pay in one sum." They sent it. Oh, no. They didn't send it but told me to pick it up.



I knew they had money, which I had deposited in the Bank of America. That wasn't their money. Our money was deposited there. They sent me a slip.

Q: When you moved to an assembly center, what did you do with your belongings?

A: Our belongings.....only clothing. We had no choice but packed our clothing. Other things such as the furniture had to be sold off dirt-cheap. It was \$ 20 in all, including a bedroom set, diningroom set, sofa and a chair. The buyer insisted on the price. I had no choice. I said, "All right, take them all." I had my petition made for partitioning the garage to put in other things, leaving enough space for a car. My elder sister's family, elder brother's family and my family put a lot of things in there. In the meantime, we moved from the assembly center to Tule Lake. At Tule Lake, my elder sister and other people came to me and told me they wanted to have this and that. I had to ask the W.R.A. to take out the things we wanted. Although we'd locked it, quite a few things were stolen. We couldn't request particular items, for they didn't know what we were talking about. I had everything sent to me. Not all were delivered. Some things had been stolen. some people had their things stolen by Japanese people at Tule Lake, I'd heard. We made a claim later on through the J.A.C.L..

Q: What was life at the assembly center like?

A: Terrible! We had to line up for meals. Some were standing, others were eating.

Q: You didn't feel like eating.



A: That's right. I didn't feel satisfied.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: Well.....

Q: For three months?

A: I wonder when we moved to Tule Lake. I guess we stayed there for about two months.

Q: Did various things happen at the assembly center?

A: Among the Japanese people.

Q: People act funny when they are packed into a limited space.

A: There were some complainers. I was a head of the block. Having the children and the baby, I couldn't do too much.

Q: Was it at the assembly center?

A: It was at the assembly center, among the Japanese people. The kitchen workers served people by filling their dishes. They decided the amount, less or more, depending upon whom they were serving.

Q: Very shallow!

A: They didn't do it to me, but I could see. I just ignored them, for they were older than I. In the removal to Tule Lake, we were in the last group. We had to go by train. We had a hard time with our sick baby. Though a doctor was with us and we called upon him, he didn't take care of our baby.

Q: Your baby?

A: He is thirty now. The doctor is gone. It was a hot day.

Q: You moved to Tule Lake.....

A: Problems arose at Tule Lake, too. A cooperative was organized there. We had a bank-----not really a bank-----actually a



cash-exchange. We called it a bank. I and one more person were in charge of that. Every morning, we brought \$ 7,000 to 8,000 in cash. Within a half day, all of the cash was gone. People were paid \$ 16 or 18 by the government. Once in a while, people cashed their personal checks. I didn't cash checks unless I knew them. All cash was exchanged within a few hours in the morning. It was something. Every day. A permit to move out from the camp was proclaimed. People who wanted to do so moved out. There were some who moved into Tule Lake. One man who used to be a manager of the Sumitomo Bank, was in the cooperative. I forgot his name. He returned to Japan. (Another man whom I knew quite well, called "Yaozo," had a scarf here.) He took over the bank. The manager of the cooperative got out of Tule Lake and moved to some other camp. I was willing to help somebody, but I didn't want to lead people. Things got complicated after that.

Q: Why did things get complicated?

A: Leading people, the manager ordered people around; which wasn't what I'd expected. He was hated. The business was running all right. Since I'd been a farmer, I knew Mr. Koda who had a big rice mill. When the cooperative needed rice, he provided rice. Although we were given food in the camp, Japanese people wanted to buy rice. Knowing him, I had to write to Mr. Koda and explain the situation. He delivered one or two truckfuls of rice. Some people brewed "sake." Rice was sold like crazy. They didn't just cook rice to eat. Even a truckful of rice was all gone soon. We couldn't get rice too



often, because the government was controlling it. The government personnel in charge allowed me to do so in secret, for he knew me. He was somewhat different. While he was repairing something, he fell off the ladder and died. He was a good man.

Q: Was he a white man?

A: Yes, he was. He wasn't too old. He was older than I, though. Mr. Koda, whom I've mentioned, in ( ? ) has developed his business even more since then.

Q: The problem of loyalty arose at Tule Lake, didn't it?

A: Yes, it did.

Q: What did you think about it?

A: Loyalty.....Americans should be loyal to the United States. There were some people who agitated other people. People were trapped by them.

Q: How did it happen?

A: The young men from Japan.....I had been struggling here in the United States; however, I knew Japan wouldn't win. Against such a large country! I was called upon many times in the camp.

Q: Were you called upon by a radical group?

A: No. I was called upon by the office. I had brought my wife with me when I went back to Japan for the second time, under the treaty of commerce. The treaty was abolished because of the war. My status automatically expired. That's why the office called me.

Q: Did they ask you if you wanted to go back?



A: No. Masao Nishimi was listed in the group for returning to Japan. I didn't have to decide, for I had been in the group already. However, they couldn't force me to return, because I had United-States-born children. It was a question of whether the government would take care of them. Even after I came here, after the war, I was called upon. They were also at a loss. They didn't know what to do. At the camp, I was asked, "Nishimi, which one, do you think, will win?" I answered, "The stronger one will win." I didn't name one, but said that the strong one would win. They laughed, too.

Q: Didn't the radical people take notice of you if you said such a thing?

A: They may have. After something happened with Mr. Hitomi, I was relocated within the camp. My family remained there, but I was moved to the white housing area.

Q: Because you were in danger?

A: Yes, I was in danger. I was evacuated. I returned on the day for the funeral.

Q: It was a dangerous period.

A: It was. I heard later that somebody spoke up for me saying, "Nishimi isn't such a man." Then, I was saved.

Q: Was the man named Mr. Fushimi killed?

A: Mr. Hitomi.

Q: Was Mr. Hitomi called a dog?

A: No. I can't tell you, but people say it was because of (a woman). I don't know.

Q: How old was Mr. Hitomi? Over fifty?



A: No. He was young. He was younger than I.

Q: I see. Was he Nisei?

A: He was Issei. He was like me, who had been called upon.

Q: Was the radical group powerful at Tule Lake?

A: It was strong.

Q: You couldn't speak up freely.

A: No, I couldn't. There arose a problem concerning the cooperative and people had a meeting. Since we were given food, the cooperative should not sell extravagant food; which was all right. I listened to somebody requesting this and that because of his child's favorites. That was something extra. We were not to sell anything extra. If you request special food just because of your child, it doesn't make any sense. The person, who said so, is in a branch of the Buddhist Church. People with grudges were the ones who had not been doing anything meaningful outside. They didn't have to worry about food there. They just had a big mouth about everything. People with any sense at all remained silent.

Q: Everybody was in an abnormal condition. People who didn't have self-discipline or who couldn't control themselves, spoke up at random.

A: People who used to have their own business didn't say anything.

Q: People without responsibilities were.....

A: That's right. So, they started to agitate the youth. I thought they were troublesome.

Q: They were pretty violent, weren't they?

A: Yes, they were.



Q: That was the trouble.

A: I don't know about the present, but three or four years ago, students in Tokyo were violent. It was an ideological strife among destructive groups.

Q: The problem of volunteers also arose, didn't it?

A: Soldiers?

Q: What did you think about the Nisei volunteers?

A: I thought it good if somebody was willing to volunteer. Actually, they had to volunteer, for they were United States citizens.

Q: Did a lot of people volunteer from Tule Lake?

A: No, not too many did from Tule Lake. They had gotten out of Tule Lake before doing that.

Q: They'd gotten out first, and then they joined.

A: I knew Mr. Tsukamoto, who was an attorney. People spoke ill of him a lot in those days. People's thoughts were all mixed-up then. They didn't think deeply enough.

Q: That's true. You were working for the cooperative throughout the time you were there?

A: Yes, I was working for the cooperative. I didn't do anything during the first year. Our children were small, and my wife didn't feel well due to post-pregnancy shock. I took care of the children for about one year. I helped the cooperative as something like an assistant manager. Talking about Mr. Hitomi, a manager is supposed to lead people. He wasn't good at leading people. That was why people turned against him. Though he was a nice person, he couldn't lead others. Anybody feels excited if he is ordered around, especially bad in such a place.



Q: How long did you work in the cooperative?

A: For quite a long time. Problems arose.

Q: What arose?

A: Mr. Hitomi died. Let's see.....was it after people moved in from other camps.....After Mr. Hitomi died.....In the meanwhile, we went to see other camps accompanied by one white man. We went through Denver and took a look at two camps. Those camps allowed much more freedom than the camp at Tule Lake. They were located inland. Anyway they looked much less harsh. It was strict about people's going out and coming in at Tule Lake. Over there in those camps, people went back and forth one after another. Nobody checked them.

Q: The administration wasn't good? The people who administered the camp weren't understanding?

A: I didn't see any soldiers standing on watch. Over here, soldiers were standing on watch.

Q: I hear that the food wasn't good.

A: It wasn't a matter of good or bad. It didn't suit their taste. That's why they concluded that the food was lousy. It wasn't bad. Japanese people didn't eat corn flakes or other cereal. They dug a big ditch and burned it all. Otherwise, we couldn't have gotten another delivery of food. It was a waste. Since I used to handle rice, I could tell that most of the rice there was of second- or third-grade quality. The low grade rice was for soldiers. It wasn't first-grade rice, but rice was rice.....all right. Japanese cooks prepared it fine. When I wanted to eat something different, I went to the place



selling fish within the cooperative. I also bought milk separately for our children. I bought extra food, but I didn't bear a grudge concerning the food. We ate the food we were given if we could.

Q: Did you pay in cash in the cooperative?

A: In cash. The cooperative was quite a business. Since there were a great number of people, a great amount of money was circulated.

A': Though it is in the midst of your talk, how about some ice-cream?

Q: Thank you. Do you like ice-cream, Mr. Nishimi?

A: I like it. But too much ice-cream isn't good for you.

Q: Compared with other camps, the camp in Tule Lake was harsher and had more problems?

A: Not that many problems arose in other camps.

Q: You think that the people without responsibilities in life agitated young people?

A: They agitated.

Q: What is your hobby?

A: What?

Q: Your hobby.

A: I don't <sup>have</sup> many hobbies. After I moved in there, Mr. Hitomi took the initiative in building a golf-course, for we didn't have any pastimes. Though it was a golf-course, it wasn't green, but was made of sand. We made 9 holes and fenced it in, utilizing the mountain slope. Mr. Hitomi took the initiative, planned it and constructed it. He said I should learn how to



play golf. I ordered a set of golf clubs by mail order. I learned how to play golf there. It was good I'd learned. I play golf even now.

Q: Do you play other things besides golf such as "go" or "shogi?"

A: I know how to play them, but I'm not interested in them too much.

Q: What do you recall the best, talking about the camp? The Tule Lake camp.....

A: Living conditions?

Q: Yes.

A: It was my very first time to experience such a life.

Q: Did you feel miserable?

A: ( ? ) was another thing. Upon notification of the evacuation, I was lying down and thinking about the tall-fenced place I would have to get into. It was before I moved in. Once I moved in, it wasn't too bad. The place was spacious. It took a long time to walk from one fence to another. The section I was in was near the fence. I didn't feel too restricted due to the spaciousness.

Q: Had you ever been afraid of being killed?

A: No, I hadn't. I think we were better off in the camp than outside at that time. Otherwise, we might have been killed. Public opinion at that time showed such tendencies. Even before the evacuation, some Japanese people were hurt by Filipinos.

Q: In Sacramento?

A: Before the evacuation, one or two may have been killed. After



the began, if the Japanese people had remained outside, the government would have had to provide protection for the Japanese people through the medium of newspaper or something. Otherwise, it could have been a hell without any employment. We couldn't work. What could have been done?

Q: When did you leave the camp?

A: In 1945. I submitted an application as soon as return to the West coast was permitted. The application wasn't proceeded immediately. I had to arrange the house, which was rented to a white family. McClutchy Real Estate Company is here even now. I went to McClutchy Real Estate Company, which I'd known, to ask for my house. In the beginning, McClutchy Real Estate Company sent me the rent. Later on, they couldn't send me the rent, for I was an alien. They kept all the rent and paid the taxes. They gave me the accumulated sum of money at one time. I told them the prospective date for return. I went to the Reserve Bank concerning the farm. I wondered what I should do after coming back. There was an apartment-hotel for lease excluding the land. I wanted to try the business. I had to get a loan. The loan application procedure took so long that I couldn't make it. I told Mr. Tambara about it. He's gone now. The place was located on 5th St., a little up from Hill St.. I handed over the deal to Mr. Tambara. Not being a permanent resident, I had to go through a complicated procedure. The white bank examiner was taking over my farming business. He, Joseph Runlop, took over the large asparagus business which Dr. Murano's inlaws used to have



down the river. He formed an asparagus corporation during the war. He failed in the business, because he couldn't find any laborers. The reason he took it over was that he saw the accounting book which showed a big profit made by the Japanese. He thought he would make a profit though he didn't know anything about farming. He failed. I was renting my old car. I asked him to give it back to me, because I was going to come back. The car had four different-size tires. He couldn't afford tires. The window was broken. I paid a few hundred dollars to buy the proper-size tires. I picked up my children at Tule Lake with the car. We came back in the car. I paid \$ 200 for car repairs. Runlop said he'd pay the money, but he never did. I wondered what Runlop's occupation was. He was an insurance salesman. He said, "Since I owe you some money, I'll pay the first premium. In exchange for that, will you buy an insurance policy?" I said, "No. Just give me the money." If I had bought the policy, he would have gotten a commission. After a short while, he left the company. He found a job at the old State Fair. He wasn't successful, though he was a college graduate. He should have remained as a bank examiner of the State, instead of working on such a thing. The man who used to be above him was excellent. His name was George.....I had known him since the opening of the Sumitomo Bank on 4th St.. He died a few years ago. When I was called every day to go to the ground floor of the old Sumitomo Bank building, he was director of the people in charge. He said to me, "Mr. Nishimi, the war won't last forever. The



public is cold at present, but don't worry." He was a good man.

Q: What was his name?

A: George Walker. W-A-L-K-E-R. A nice old man. His son became a lawyer. Runlop wasn't good. He was still young then.

Q: He ruined his promising future.

A: Yes. He was amazed at the big sum of money recorded in the accounting book. Sakai.....both of the Sakai brothers are gone. They were famous farmers; rich farmers. Do you know Dr. Hayashi, the Dentist? He was Grace Sugiyama's father. He died in 1930.

Q: Was your house vacated as soon as you came back?

A: By the time we came back, it had been vacated.

Q: That's good. The things you'd left at home were there?

A: We'd cleared the house. We had to buy everything.

Q: What kind of organization did you belong to? The Prefectural Association?

A: I'm not a member. When I came here.....

Q: Before the war?

A: Before the war, I knew the president of the Japanese Association. Since I went to the farming camp often, I didn't get in touch with the organization too much. I probably wasn't a member. Now that I'm back, I have a social obligation. I can't help it.

Q: You don't like such things?

A: It's not a matter of "like" or "dislike." At one time after the war, quite a few Japanese people, who had been here for a



long time, got together. People such as ( ? )'s late father gathered. We discussed organizing a Japanese association or something. Nothing came out of it then. I don't want to speak ill of others, but one person was against each word I said. He said, "You never can do such a thing." I was out of the question. Though I had my own business and was fairly old, I was treated like a child. The old president was kind to me. The other old man, who was assisting him, had an unreasonable disliking for me. I withdrew myself.

Q: Are you a member of the Nichiren Sect?

A: I'm a member of the Nichiren Sect now.

Q: What about before the war?

A: Nothing.

Q: Was there a Japanese association before the war? Did you join it?

A: I didn't join the Japanese Association. The Japanese man, who had been the president for a long time, was managing the branch office of the Nichibei Times. He was killed in a traffic accident on K St.. Mr. Sato. Mrs. Sato became (mentally) ill and went back to Japan 3 or 4 years ago. She was Mrs. Itano's close friend. Mr. Sato was a close friend of mine. He was kind to me. He asked me to join the Japanese Association. I answered jokingly, "If you appoint me president, I will join."

Q: I see.

A: I didn't join.

Q: How many times did you return to Japan?

A: Only twice.



- Q: What about lately?
- A: It's been six years.
- Q: What did you think about Japan?
- A: Not good at all.....It looked stuffy.
- Q: How?
- A: If you go to central Tokyo where the tall buildings are, it's all right. Otherwise, it's crowded and disorganized. The scenery looks beautiful, but once you approach it, you'll find it dirty. The service is not good.
- Q: You're right.
- A: I had a hardtime understanding the language, although they spoke Japanese. They didn't understand what I said, and I didn't understand what they said. They spoke in abbreviations or talked fast. Especially when I bought a ticket at a train station.....I asked my sister to write down the necessary things I should say (at the station).
- Q: You can hardly go by yourself.
- A: I don't want to go unless I'm with somebody. The reason I went on a sightseeing tour six years ago was that.....The enlarged picture taken by me is there.....I saw the advertisement on "Ama no Hashidate," where I'd wanted to go once. Besides that, the Ito family, whom I know well, was going. I felt it was ideal; otherwise, I wouldn't have taken the trip.
- Q: What did you think about the white people? Were there both good and bad ones?
- A: In Japan?



Q: Here.

A: The white people I associated with were good.

Q: What about the ones you don't know, in general?

A: Conditions have changed now. They may feel prejudice inside, but they've changed on the surface. They, including my neighbors, associate with us naturally.

Q: It means the situation has improved.

A: That's right. Partly, it is due to the Nisei who volunteered to become soldiers and fought so hard. The J.A.C.L. is active in doing various things. All of these things are gradually being noticed.

Q: The Japanese-American Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei are Americans, but they are Japanese at the same time. They are acknowledging themselves as Japanese-Americans. Do you think it is a good trend?

A: They're registered in the United States registry; however, they are of the Japanese race. They'd better remember that at all times.

Q: Though you'd come here as one who was called upon, you experienced the same things as the Issei did. What would you like to teach the Sansei? If you could speak with your grandchildren as much as you wanted to when they came to you, what would you like to say?

A: They'd better determine what their favorite subjects are. Unless you graduate from a four-year-college at least, you can't stand on your own feet. It's not fun to live by labor. When I came to the United States.....Before coming here, I



intended to return to Japan after attending school for three years. Since I was interested in business.....The business has various aspects such as human contact and office work. Mine was the office work type. I wanted to be engaged in business and I did try it. It's not bad to work for somebody, but you're motivated more if you have your own business. Unless you major in your favorite subject and go into the world, you can't lead a really happy life.

Q: What do you think about hardship? The Issei had experienced tremendous hardship.

A: A certain amount of hardship is necessary. It was good for me to know that I had been raised under destitute conditions since my childhood. If one stays well off, he takes it for granted.

Q: He does not know how to appreciate things.

A: Everybody should experience hardship.

Q: You're active in the Nichiren Temple, aren't you?

A: I'm helping them, because others don't have enough time.

Q: How important, do you think, is religion for youth today?

A: Religion itself is a part of my experience. As I've told you, I attended a Catholic school in Japan. A few days a week after school, we had a religious class in a separate room on the 3rd or 5th floor. The teacher told us a lot of things about Jesus Christ. The third or fourth family I worked for as a schoolboy, after coming to the United States, was Catholic. Because of that school experience, I liked to listen to religious talk. I didn't intend to become a Catholic, though.



Apart from that, when I was in the Japanese community, the people from our village were active with the Daishi Temple. They had memorial services for their relatives.

Q: The Daishi?

A: The Daishi Temple.

Q: Koyasan?

A: Koyasan. I'm not a member. After the war began.....Oh no, it was before the war, I felt my family was away from religion. I thought I should get into something. Anything would have been fine. After the war, a discussion meeting was held at Mr. Nakatani's place. Mr. Sasaki of a newspaper company came and asked me about rice farming. The newspaper, the Mainichi Newspaper Company in San Francisco, wanted to ask me. He's the president of the "New World" now. He came and published quite a big article about those days in the newspaper. Apart from that, Mr. Sasaki asked me things concerning religion. A lot of things were discussed. It was all right in the beginning. At the end, I don't recall very well, but I asked Mr. Sasaki for an explanation. He said, "You'll never understand even if I explain it to you." I said, "I see. O.K.." If he had explained it to me, whether or not I could fully understand, I might have become a member of his church. Listening to his words, I said, "I won't, then. No thank you."

Q: He was thoughtless.

A: Even though he was a clergyman.....Being non-clergy, I didn't know too much about religion. He denied me flatly, saying, "You won't understand my explanation." I asked him, because



I didn't know. Running a store, I knew quite a few people related to the Nichiren Sect. I was persuaded and went to listen to preachings before joining the church. They talked about the truth.....nothing else in particular. I felt it'd be all right to become a member. Then, I did. No ( ? ).

Q: Coming back to Sacramento, what did you do? What business?

A: A wholesale store for Japanese food.

Q: Mitsuwa.....

A: Mitsuwa Company.

Q: For a long time?

A: For twenty or twenty-two years.

Q: After returning....Are you retired now?

A: I've retired already. It's been about seven years.....

Q: Did things go smoothly upon your return?

A: When the Korean War began, my business wasn't easy.

Q: How?

A: Let's see.....I was afraid I wouldn't make it. Before the war or after the war.....the business improved. At one time it slowed down and turned bad. I wondered how long it could be sustained. Somehow I made it.

Q: Goods were scarce after the war?

A: Scarce. Of course, no shipment came from Japan. Only the Japanese food made here such as "udon" produced by Mr. Aoki in Oakland and dried plums, actually they were apricuts, produced by Mr. Kono's son.....various things.....Thinking back, I felt sorry. I used to be a farmer and also handled genuine Japanese goods. I didn't feel like handling such



items. Before our leaving the camp, Marusho soy sauce had been sold. I became a contract salesman for it in the Sacramento area in California. I didn't have Mitsuwa Company at the start. I was selling it as a contract salesman of that company. I went from here to San Jose and Mountain View to make sales.

Q: Oh, I see. When was it?

A: After I returned. I did that for about a year. Not having anything else to sell, I couldn't have a good business. So, I quit and opened my own store. I dealt with soy sauce in my store. Mr. Shohei Oda, whom I'd known for a long time, was an old man. He was also a salesman but for another company. He and I decided to run a business, establishing Mitsuwa Company. First of all, I got a loan from the Bank of America, mortgaging my life insurance policy. I'd known them before the war. I used to be with the Sumitomo Bank. After the Sumitomo Bank closed down, I changed to the Bank of America. The Bank of America was kind to me. One of them died. Another retired three or four years ago, after I did. He lives in the Grand Park area. I see him sometimes. He was kind. I always had thousands of loans.

Q: What has happened to the store now?

A: I'd sold it. You know the big company named the "Japan Foods." They opened a branch here, because I closed my business. The place was small. Though I had a lease, I cancelled it and paid the amount of lease. They have a store on C St. and N St.. They have quite a business.



Q: How many children do you have?

A: Two boys and one girl. Our elder son is with Warp Machine.

Q: What is he doing?

A: He is an investment broker. The second son is with Douglass, the airplane industry. The plant is in Long Beach. They take orders mainly from commercial airline companies. He is an aero-engineer there.

Q: What about your daughter?

A: He is the same type of engineer as our second son, but a little different. You know Hughes Aircraft, don't you?

Q: Your daughter's husband?

A: Yes. They live in the northern area of Long Beach. They used to live far away. They moved a few years ago.

Q: Is your elder brother working?

A: A little.

Q: How old is he?

A: He is one and a half years older than I. He's 76.

Q: Your elder brother had come here before you?

A: Yes. A few years ahead.....We were in the same age group and had a similar body-build then.

Q: Did your elder brother have a loan business?

A: At first, he worked with my father at a lemon ranch. Upon our father's return to Japan, he came up to the city of Los Angeles. He worked in Los Angeles for Saji Company, which was a wholesale store for various imported gift shop items such as leather-wear, beach-wear, and so on. He worked there for a long time. He came across an ice-shop for sale, owned by an old Japanese



man. He had the business till the war.

Q: Where?

A: In Los Angeles. ( ? ) in Los Angeles, with a garage located nextdoor. His small store was next to it.

Q: You must have been thinking about a lot of things, having lived in this country for such a long time.

A: I forgot about Japan. Even if I go to my birth place, I can't communicate with people. I don't have anything in common even with the people I attended elementary school together.